

# VISITING TE TAPUWAE O RONGOKAKO MARINE RESERVE

## NOTES FOR SCHOOLS AND EDUCATORS



Photo: Trudi Ngawhare

### Key information



Te Tapuwae o Rongokako Marine Reserve is near Gisborne on the east coast of the North Island. The reserve is 16 km north of Gisborne and can be accessed by State Highway 35 from Pouawa.

Te Tapuwae o Rongokako, 'The footprint of Rongokako', Marine Reserve was established in 1999, after many years of work by Ngāti Konohi and the Department of Conservation (DOC).

It protects about 2,450 ha of coastline, and features eight marine habitat types, including inshore reefs, rocky intertidal platforms and sediment flats.

For more information and a map of this reserve, see: [www.doc.govt.nz/te-tapuuae-o-rongokako](https://www.doc.govt.nz/te-tapuuae-o-rongokako).

### Visitor facilities and parking

There are public toilets, picnic tables, a picnic area, and information signs available for visitors at this reserve. Parking and access to the reserve is via Pouawa Road. See: [www.doc.govt.nz/te-tapuuae-mr-brochure](https://www.doc.govt.nz/te-tapuuae-mr-brochure).

Water at the reserve is not suitable for drinking, so bring drinking water with you.



## Suggested self-guided activities for school groups

### Biodiversity survey

The Marine Metre Squared Project (Mm2) is an easy quadrat survey for investigating what is living in your marine reserve. See  [www.mm2.net.nz](http://www.mm2.net.nz) for resources. Rocky shore surveys or sandy shore surveys can be carried out approximately 2 hours either side of low tide. For more information, see  *Activity 8: Visiting Marine Reserves*.

**Note:** when conducting a Mm2 survey, it is important to keep disturbance of sand and animals to a minimum and put them back where you found them.

The beach and intertidal reefs are best explored at low tide. The sandy beach is about 4 km long, and there are intertidal reef platforms around Pariokonohi Point near the southern boundary.

### Litter survey

Conduct a litter survey on the beach to investigate human impacts on this marine reserve. You'll be cleaning it up as you go!

See page 9 of the DOC *Habitat Heroes: Explore your local marine environment* resource for instructions:  [www.doc.govt.nz/habitat-heroes-marine-resource.pdf](http://www.doc.govt.nz/habitat-heroes-marine-resource.pdf). Survey sheets and guidance for beach clean-ups and litter audits are available at  [www.loveyourcoast.org.nz/learn](http://www.loveyourcoast.org.nz/learn) (Love Your Coast/Sustainable Coastlines).

### Dune plant survey

Look at the dune plants and see if you can identify them. Be careful not to walk on dunes during your survey and respect any barriers. See page 10 of the DOC *Habitat Heroes: Explore your local marine environment* resource for instructions:  [www.doc.govt.nz/habitat-heroes-marine-resource.pdf](http://www.doc.govt.nz/habitat-heroes-marine-resource.pdf).

### Short walk

**Beach walk (1 hr 30 min):** A beach walk is at the northern end of the reserve. Here you can see remnants of the Old Coach Road along the beach. You will also get a magnificent view of Whangara Island/Te Ana o Paieka.

There are opportunities for birdwatching.

## Health and safety considerations

- There is sometimes a current in the channel draining the reef platform during incoming and outgoing tides which can be dangerous for snorkellers or swimmers. If you are planning to swim or snorkel, check the tide times and plan accordingly.
- At certain times of year there are biting insects that can cause discomfort and a reaction in some people. Take insect repellent.
- NZ fur seals/kekeno may be along the beach stay – at least 20 m away from any seals.
- Teachers should also consider general risk management around water and rock shelves. See also general health and safety considerations for schools in marine environments:  *Activity 8: Visiting Marine Reserves*.

**Please note: These notes are not a substitute for school safety planning.**

Staff, students and the Board of Trustees of a school will need to consider other factors before conducting a visit outside the school and follow school procedures. Identifying and managing risks before the trip is essential, therefore a prior site visit is highly recommended.



### Habitats and species in the reserve

On the sandy shore you can spot birds, including gannets/tākapu, terns/tara, oystercatchers/tōrea, New Zealand dotterels/tūturiwhatu and gulls. Marine mammals such as New Zealand fur seals/kekeno, dolphins/aihe and some whale species are regular visitors. Exploring the intertidal reef, you will find crabs/pāpaka, and barnacles/werewere.

The subtidal area of the reserve contains several distinct habitats. Down to about 10 m in depth, a variety of seaweeds/rimurimu such as flapjack and kelp can be found. Some of the fish you may see are spotties/paketi, banded wrasse/ tāngahanga, red moki/nanua, hiwihiwi, greenbone butterfish/ mararī, marblefish/ kehe and black bream/parore.

### Education providers working here

**Nga Mahi Te Taiao**, Gisborne, offers LEOTC programmes in this marine reserve. For school bookings, see:  [www.nmtt.co.nz/education/he-tai-ora-the-living-sea](http://www.nmtt.co.nz/education/he-tai-ora-the-living-sea).

Contact: Amy-Rose Hardy, email: [amyhardy@nmtt.co.nz](mailto:amyhardy@nmtt.co.nz).

### Other education experiences

**Kiwi Guardians** at Te Tapuwae o Rongokako Marine Reserve:  [www.doc.govt.nz/kg-te-tapuwae-o-rongokako](http://www.doc.govt.nz/kg-te-tapuwae-o-rongokako).

#### PROTECT OUR MARINE RESERVES

They are special places that protect the species and habitats within them.

- No fishing of any kind
- Don't take or kill marine life
- Don't remove or disturb any marine life or materials
- Don't feed fish – it disturbs their natural behaviour
- Take care when anchoring to avoid damaging the sea floor
- Call **0800 DOC HOT** (0800 362 468) to report any illegal activity.

